

Programme & Speakers

09:00 Registration, tea and coffee.

09:30 Greetings and welcome from Danielle Peters on behalf of the Hertfordshire Local Family Justice Board.

09:35 Key note address and welcome, the designated Family Judge for Hertfordshire, His Honour Judge Vavrecka.

09:45 **Detective Inspector Terri Heredia, Hertfordshire Police**

Investigation of recent and historic child sexual abuse allegations; forensic evidence, witness testimonies, and the joint working approach.

DI Heredia is the Lead Officer for Hertfordshire Police Joint Child Protection Investigation Team and the Safeguarding Hub. DI Heredia has been a police officer since October 1994, having worked extensively throughout her career in safeguarding and child abuse investigation at both a strategic and operational level.

Overview of Presentation

DI Heredia will give an overview of the role of the Police in investigating both historic and recent child sexual abuse allegations and consider the use and benefits of joint working, video recorded evidence and the application of the "truth and lies" test. DI Heredia will deal with the challenges the Police face in historic abuse cases, addressing in particular issues relating to corroborative forensic and witness testimony.

10:30 **Her Honour Judge Marie Catterson, St Albans Crown Court**

Her Honour Marie Catterson was a barrister for almost 30 years, before becoming a Circuit Judge in 2001. For many years, she tried a variety of criminal cases at St Albans Crown Court until retiring from the Bench in 2018 after 17 years as a full time judge. She has vast experience of trying criminal cases involving both physical and sexual abuse.

She was for many years one of the trainers for the Serious Sexual Offences Course for the Judicial College so has trained a generation of criminal judges.

Overview of Presentation: The criminal court's experience and perspective

- *How does a criminal court approach historical allegations of abuse?*
- *Issues of evidence and standard of proof;*
- *Examples of the variety and seriousness of abuse cases*
- *The different types of evidence criminal court might receive and some of the difficulties associated with historic abuse cases*
- *How does the criminal court take into account the vulnerability of the complainant*
- *Impact on the complainant/'victim' of the court process itself*
- *The extent to which therapy and support may be offered to the complainant before or during the criminal trial process,*
- *Use of expert witnesses in the criminal trial process*

- Sentencing in the event of a conviction

11:15 Refreshment Break

11:30 Frazer Smith, Hertfordshire County Council

Frazer Smith has a B(Ed) Honours degree and initially qualified and worked as a teacher. He has been working in Children's Services for over 20 years, the last 15 years in child protection. In this time, he has worked as a Child Protection School Liaison Officer, supporting schools in Hertfordshire with their statutory duties around safeguarding. He was one of the first Local Authority Designated Officers (LADO) in Hertfordshire, dealing with allegations against adults that work with Children. Currently he manages both the Child Protection School Liaison and LADO Teams for Hertfordshire County Council.

His presentation will consider the role of education establishments in the making, transferring and retaining of a child's school records and how these have been used to provide corroborative evidence in historic child sexual abuse cases and information to the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. He will consider the improvements and pitfalls in record keeping over the years and highlight the relevance of accurate record keeping when not knowing the future relevance of those records. He will consider the role of the County Council and schools in multi-agency working for example when providing information concerning previous employees and in cases where a child has gone on to be adopted.

12:15 Questions

12:45 Lunch

13:45 Alison Grief QC, 4 Paper Buildings

Alison Grief QC has specialised in the law relating to children, both Public and Private Law for 24 years and was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2015. Alison was appointed as a Recorder in 2012 and has formerly acted as an Assistant Coroner in both the Hertfordshire and Mid-Kent and Medway jurisdictions. She specialises in the most complex cases, often involving the analysis of expert medical evidence in alleged non-accidental injuries particularly catastrophic head injury, FII and metabolic disorders and highly complex cases of alleged sexual abuse involving paedophile rings, inter-generational and sibling abuse, often spanning generations, child trafficking and sexual exploitation. Her Private law work often involves the most complex allegations of sexual abuse, parental alienation, emotional abuse and mental health issues in which her Public law skills are utilised to bring a forensic but still child centred approach to the proceedings.

“She is at the top of her game, an amazing advocate and someone with a mind that is as sharp as a razor. She’s so forensic in her approach but at the same time she’s got a really lovely, warm manner with clients”.

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The tension between meeting the Article 6 rights of both an alleged perpetrator and an alleged victim is never more strained than in the context of determining allegations of historic abuse. How does the Court consider the difficult issue of evidence without corroboration, its approach to reliability and lies and retractions, use of research and veracity evidence especially within the framework of protection for vulnerable witnesses, including children? Are we getting that balance right? Alison will take the audience through this difficult area to identify strengths and weaknesses.

14:30 Dr David La Rooy, Doctor of Philosophy, Chartered Psychologist, Expert Witness

Dr David La Rooy is a Chartered Psychologist, Associate Fellow of the British Psychology Society and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. He is an internationally recognised expert in child forensic interviewing and provides specialist training to Police, Social Workers, Solicitors, Lawyers, Advocates, Sheriffs and Judges. He was awarded a Scottish Institute for Policing Research Lectureship at the University of Abertay Dundee in 2008 and the Award for Academic Excellence by the International Investigative Interviewers Research Group in 2015. He is currently a Senior Lecturer in the School of Law at Royal Holloway University of London.

15:15 Panel Discussion

16:00 Close